

Start thinking summer

Nearby resorts offer family fun (and alone time!)

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By day, kids are entertained at summer camp and by night the families enjoy nighttime activities together at Smuggler's Notch Resort in Vermont.

BY MARY DONIUS

Families who crave time together — and maybe a little time apart — during their summer vacation have a broad selection of top-notch New England resorts where Mom and Dad can play tennis (or take a nap) while the kids play volleyball or attend day camp.

Some of the premiere family resorts in the country are only a couple of hours drive from the Boston area — the challenge is in finding the one that best suits your vacation dreams and your budget.

The good news is that many resorts offer special deals during the week and some weekends and holidays. Some offer kids' camps, while others stress family activities. So there's plenty of opportunity to plan an unforgettable family vacation, without breaking into the college savings plans. Here's a look at some of the best:

Mt. Washington Resort at Bretton Woods

Bretton Woods,
New Hampshire

www.mtwashingtonresort.com

Mt. Washington Resort is as historic as it is beautiful. Nestled

into the White Mountains, the resort has a sophisticated feel that has been updated to accommodate today's busy families. Despite the more formal feel of the Mt. Washington Hotel, the gem of this multi-property resort, families are most welcome.

You could probably spend hours on the wraparound porch with a breathtaking view of Mt. Washington, but if you're traveling with children, you'll be better off in one of the resort's more spacious town homes or one of the resort's other properties such as The Lodge at Bretton Woods, than in the smallish rooms in the older part of the hotel. But no matter where you choose to stay, you have full access to the resort's amenities. And there is free, 24-hour shuttle bus service to get you anywhere you want to go on the expansive campus.

The resort has wonderful clay tennis courts, a championship golf course and several pools. Free family activities are offered at various times during the day and are as varied as tie-dye T-shirt making, resort tours and tennis clinics. Day camps and evening activities are available for an extra fee. However, if you stay in the hotel, day camp is free.

Reservation tips: The best deal for families is Sunday through Thursday nights when kids 12 and under stay and eat for free at the Mt. Washington Hotel and get to go to camp, too. If you're an organizer, arrange for family and friends to visit Mt. Washington Resort at the same time and you'll get 20 percent off your room rate when you book five rooms at a time.

Smuggler's Notch

Smuggler's Notch, Vermont
www.smuggs.com

On its Web site, Smuggler's

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Notch posts dozens of accolades from newspapers and magazines around the country, and, once you visit, it's easy to see why. Smuggler's is a true family destination resort which was designed with families in mind.

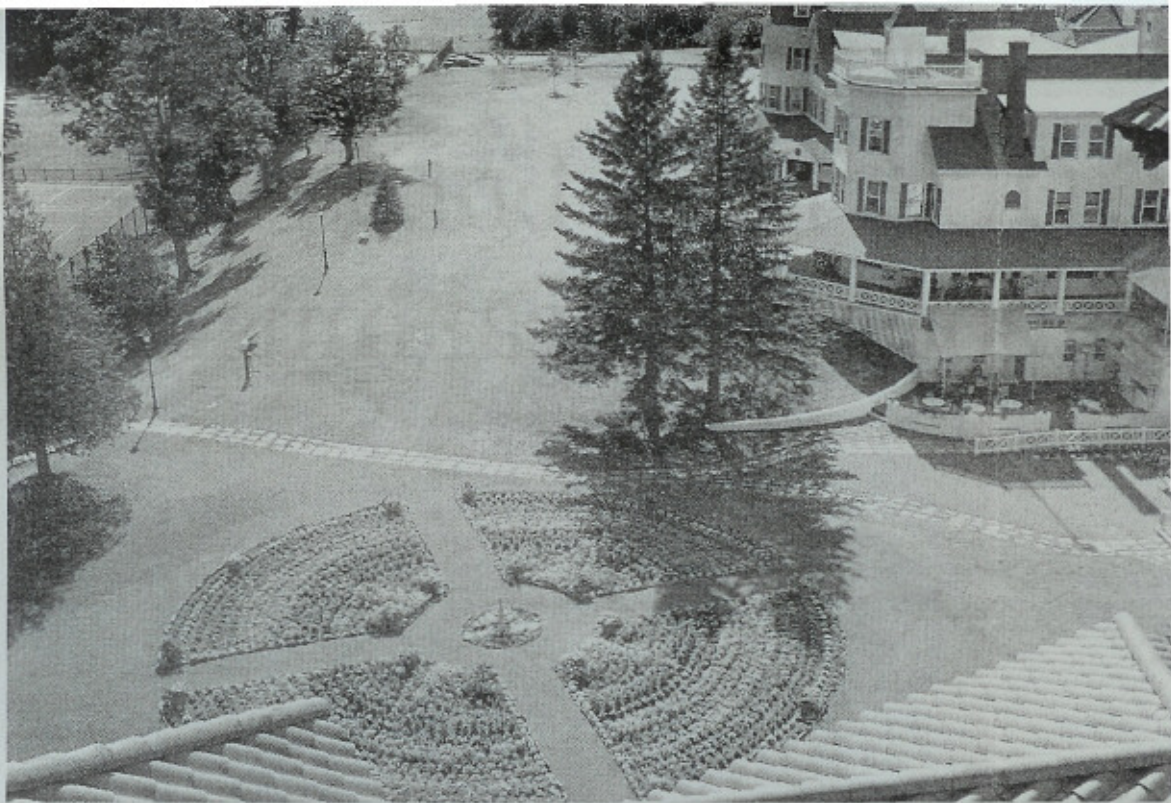
The centerpiece of the resort is its day camps organized by interest and age 4 to 17. The camps are included in the price and are run by enthusiastic college students who seem to really like children.

The idea – and most kids seem to love it – is that the kids are busy with kids their own age all day long with arts and crafts, nature and hiking or adventure and games, then come together with their families for nighttime activities. One evening there is a bonfire, a magic show and county fair on another.

There is also an on-site day-care center available for children 6 months to three years who are too young for the camps. In addition, Smuggler's can arrange for a one-on-one counselor – at an additional fee – for a child with special needs.

Smuggler's Notch has several restaurants on site and all accommodations offer cooking facilities and access to outdoor grills.

Reservation tips: Smuggler's offers an elaborate set of packages and rates. The best deals are early summer, from June 9 to June 22, when you can save 35 percent off of middle of the summer rates. On those dates, you also get free day care at Treasures, the resort's center, if you stay three or more nights. (Daycare is usually \$66 per day).



A view of the beautiful grounds at The Balsams in Dixville Notch, New Hampshire.

FAMILY TRAVEL

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Other Places to Consider:

The Balsams

Dixville Notch,
New Hampshire
www.thebalsams.com

This grand dame resort is spread over hundreds of acres of wilderness and is an ideal spot for families. Rates include all meals, golf, tennis and all recreational activities, including Camp Wind Whistle for kids ages 5 and up. Reservation tip: Because all meals and camps are included in the price, The Balsams is expensive. For best rates, go before July 4 or during the week. If you're children are too young to go to school, there are some great deals available for just after Labor Day into the Leaf Peeping Season/
Somerset Resort

Save money on dining

☀ When traveling with small children, consider upgrading to a room (or condo) with some amenities such as a refrigerator and microwave or stove. This will not only be more convenient, but save money in the long run so you can store snacks and keep drinks cold.

☀ Many family resorts offer a full kitchen and/or use of an outdoor grill in your accommodations. Be prepared. While you probably don't want to cook the whole time you're away, having the ability to throw hamburgers on the grill, or whip up some sandwiches, will be a life saver when everyone's hungry, but too tired to go out to eat.

☀ If you plan to eat some meals in, bring supplies with you. Often, resort supermarkets are expensive and have limited offerings.

☀ Splurge a little. If you're bringing food along, splurge on fancy dips, good cuts of meat and other goodies you don't usually buy when you're at home. It may be a little more expensive – but much cheaper than going out for every meal.